deeper principle ; but we cannot help admiring., that in the absence of such, the world is kept from sinking into intolerable degradation, and helped forward in the onward march of civilisation, by evils being made to counteract prevailing evils, and harmony being produced by notes in themselves discordant.

Having resolved these phenomena into the perversions of conscience, we are enabled to class along with them, and under the same head, those superstitious fears which have exercised so extensive a power upon mankind. A superstitious terror has been the means of restraining multitudes from crime, when love to God or to virtue would have been altogether ineffectual. Witches and fairies, ghosts and demons., gods and goddesses, the penances inflicted by the priesthood, and the terrors brought from the invisible world, (we allude, of course, to superstitious terrors,) have all exercised a power in keeping back mankind from deeds which would have proved injurious to society. The peopling of the air, the streams, and the woods, with supernatural beings, and of the darkness with ghosts, has deterred from the commission of crime multitudes who could not have been awed by the thought of an omnipresent God. Every one knows how dangerous it is, so far as the peace of society is concerned, to remove even a false religion, till such time as true religion has taken its place; for, in rooting up the weed, the very grain may be torn up along with it.

All statesmen have now come to see, that man cannot do without a religion. It has often been said, that the very worst governments are better than no government: and a precisely analogous maxim seems now to be adopted in regard to religion, that the very worst religions are better, so far as the peace of society is concerned, than none. Legislators have thence leapt to the conclusion, that the state should countenance every religion; but this reasoning proceeds on the perilous fallacy that virtue consists in utility, and

that virtues and vices pass into each other byinsensible gradations. A higher and juster view of the nature of virtue, and of the essential difference between it and vice, would lead to the very different conclusion:—that, though under obligation to tolerate a religion believed to be false, we are not at liberty directly to countenance it in any circumstances, nor to any extent, without contracting a far greater amount of guilt than those who sincerely, though ignorantly, are the votaries of the mistaken faith.

Here the remark is forced upon us, that as almost all changes